The Commonweal

August 22, 1947

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VOLUME XLVI **15c** NUMBER 19

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The COMMONWEAL

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The Future of Economic Planning

IT IS HARDLY necessary to search out additional reasons for regretting the decline of the British experiment in Socialism, but there is one repercussion which should be anticipated: the apparent failure of the British plan is bound to reflect discredit on economic planning everywhere, particularly in the United States where the possibility of controlling an economy has never been generally accepted. The way things have turned out in England will surely be seized on here as proof that the economic juices of a nation must be allowed to gush and swirl without restraint. What remains of the Roosevelt approach will be further weakened, and the mystique of free enterprise will be discussed with new interest and respect.

One of the first places where this reinforced opposition to planning can be expected to show up will be in any further discussions of a Mississippi or Missouri Valley Authority. The come-down in England will do a lot for such opponents of large federal planning as Senator Chan Gurney, who not long ago outlined the reasons for his position in regard to an MVA, among them the claim that the people of the Mississippi Basin (those the Senator gets to see, that is) do not want a Valley Authority out their way.

They may not, but on the chance that the Senator's circle of friends is not as adamant as he thinks it is, it might be worthwhile to point out, once more, that planning on the adventurous scale has worked in this country in a situation (the TVA) that is not so very different from the one now prevalent in the Mississippi Basin. (Senator Gurney cannot, for the life of him, see any parallel between the TVA and the proposed MVA.)

The most up-to-date source of information on regional progress under the TVA is a recent interview granted to the press by Mr. Gordon R. Clapp, present chairman of the TVA. In summarizing changes in the Tennessee Valley which can be directly attributed to the thirteen-year existence of the Authority, Mr. Clapp has pointed out that for the first time in sixty years the flow of population out of the seven Tennessee Valley States has been arrested. Better than that, population gains in those states have lately been higher than the population rise for the nation as a whole. And the factor which accounts for this heartening reversal is the enlarged economic possibilities which have sprung up since establishment of the TVA. Mr. Clapp's survey might not seem very impressive to Senator Gurney, but it should be reassuring to anyone whose faith in the possibility of bold economic planning has not run out.

Echoes of the Stratton Bill

IF MEMBERS of the Eightieth Congress have been expecting the question of what to do about Europe's displaced persons to fade away during the long Congressional vacation, they are in for a disappointment. The Stratton Bill may be dead in the minds of the Congressmen, but in Trenton, New Jersey, its memory lingers on. Delegates to the annual convention of the New Jersey American Legion have been considering the provisions of the Stratton Bill and, as might be expected, their conclusions are typical of the international thinking of the Legion.

The New Jersey Legionnaires have made it known, through the customary resolution, that they are opposed to the main provision of the Stratton Bill—admission of some four hundred thousand displaced Europeans into this country, at the rate of one hundred thousand each year. Judging by the strength of their opposition to the Bill, the Legionnaires, in their present mood, would probably be against almost any legislation to admit Europeans into the United States.

In general, there is nothing particularly surprising about the Legionnaire reaction to the Stratton Bill. The Legion has always had its own method of deciding just who should be considered an American, or who was eligible to become one. In this instance, though, the Legionnaires have listed

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a reason for their stand which is much more interesting than their traditional suspicion of all save the pure and native born.

The prospect of an addition to this country's population by way of Europe worries the New Jersey Legionnaires because of our housing shortage. To more visionary citizens, that explanation may sound silly. Nevertheless, it is a consideration which leads to a number of interesting reflections. It reminds one, first of all, of what the Republicans failed to do about the national housing problem. It reminds one, too, of the fact that when Congress reconvenes it will again be faced with those same two problems—housing and Europe's displaced persons. And it makes one wonder, finally, if many of the Congressmen might not have a bit of the New Jersey American Legionnaire in them.

Europe's Socialism

NOTHING annoys us more than the mistrust Europeans have for our earnest desire to save them from communism or anarchy or famine. We have our Marshall Plan, and what could be fairer? All we ask is that Europe should organize itself and then come into the office, sit down at the desk and answer a few questions. That is the way it is done in our banks. In the banks of the big cities you have to wait a while and it is all a little formal. In the country towns the banker probably knows you, the store you run, the farm, with the pigs, the cows, or the wheat. But the questions are always the same, and the most important one, as all know, is the question about character. If you have not got a good reputation there is nothing doing. And if you are inefficient there is nothing doing. Sometimes you have a good character and you are inefficient also. In that case the bank will reorganize you. Or they will tell you to get an expert, or recommend a firm of experts. Because they say that there is only one way to run a business or a farm—the right way. Everyone in America who wants to get a bank loan knows that the banks are conservative and knows what he has to say and do in order to please. But also everyone in Europe knows about banks, which are the same everywhere, and that is why, now that they are applying to America for a loan—America is the only bank that is open today—they know what sort of questions they will have to answer and they are uneasy because they know they have not got the right answers.

Did anyone ever hear of a man applying for a loan who had to admit that he was trying a little socialist experiment in his business and, please, I hope that won't influence your judgment?

All Europe now is socialist, or turning socialist, and that is why the Europeans are embarrassed in their dealings with us. When the pressure is on everyone is always socialist. You have to clean the word socialist of everything that you have ever heard about the doctrines of theoretical socialism. The European trend toward socialism has nothing to do with these doctrines. The peoples of Europe are driven into a socialism, which has no doctrine, by forces which are not doctrinal—the pressure of hunger, of poverty. They are driven into accepting the theory that no one can save himself all alone because there are the facts of life after two wars and what can you do about them.

The covered wagons going West were socialist excursions, and earlier the New England colonists led socialist lives. You have to possess a margin of security and comfort before you can be anything else but a socialist.

A Frenchman came into the office and annoyed us very much. He said: "The United States is at war with socialism in Europe wherever it rears its moderate head. The Marshall Plan is a bank loan that puts the screws on Europe to abandon socialism. It is against socialism that you are moving with all your strength, your money and your food. You lend money to Italy, but you earmark a percentage to go to Italian industrialists; you have loaned money to England, but day after day many of your newspapers publicly repeat the private conviction of many of your statesmen which is that until the British give up their foolish socialist experiments there is little that can be done to help England. You have abandoned half of Europe to the Russians; the other half you hope will turn into a kind of America. You hope and you push; you advise and you bribe. You would like free American institutions, free capitalist institutions on the free American model; you would like to see them in France, in Italy, in England, even if they have to be installed by generals and reactionaries. You may be in good faith. The trouble is that you think we can choose between what you happily possess in America and all the absurd socialist planning we go in for abroad. We would not have to choose if we had the American continent to live in; living where we do we cannot choose because there is for us no choice. Has it not made the faintest impression on you that the Catholics in France are socialist now?"

We go through the day and arrange it as best we can so that we will not hear anything too unpleasant. We are willing to discuss European affairs but we choose our company. When we talk to Americans we have a tendency to select friends who will not tell us that the British, the French and the Italians are sucking our blood; we avoid the man who says that it is pleasant to see the Jews in Palestine killing each other and that perhaps soon the Arabs will join in the killing and that will help. We keep our memories of Europe, and for each country we have something very

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simple that stands for it—an English river, a French road, an Italian hill—and keeps it safe from all contempt. When we talk to Europeans we choose those who know our country well enough to be able to think of our plains, our mountains, and the freedom with which we travel across this continent finding everywhere a friendly people.

That is the way it is pleasant to organize life. But it may be very dangerous. Because there are never enough Americans who hold Europe safe from contempt, and never enough Europeans who know our friendliness. It is the Americans who despise Europe and the Europeans who mistrust America who may be in the majority. They are the people who would allow Europe and America to be severed from each other and who would not care—until suddenly they found that the civilization that forms both Europe and America had been destroyed.

It is best, then, to read the New York *Daily News* and see all that can be said to make Americans callously expect the Marshall Plan to fail because the *Daily News* wants it to fail. It is best to read the Chicago *Tribune* in order to see all the reasons there are for not caring what happens to Europe and the many reasons there are for regretting that we ever cared enough to fight two wars through a mistaken idea of solidarity. And it is a good thing also that from time to time there is someone like this Frenchman who came to bring us his bitter complaint. No man speaks only for himself. There must be many Europeans who believe what the Frenchman told us he believed. There must be many Europeans who think that the Russians are strong and the Americans are strong and to have help from either you must answer questions and promise to behave. There must be many Europeans who feel that there is no escape from humiliation.

If we find that socialism is the path they have chosen to follow, believing that it is the only path on which they can advance toward freedom, political and economic, we should not think that they have determined deliberately and perversely to offend us. If all our plans mean only that we wish to make it possible for Europe to live again, we should not allow anyone—in Europe or in America—to say that our offer is conditional. Our acts must show that our aid is granted to Europe's need. That need is for food but it is also for freedom. Our acts must show that we know that freedom includes the right of a nation to be a socialist nation, excludes only the right of any faction to make of any nation a police state. It is to the police state alone that American aid is denied. The Europeans ask us to make this policy clear in order that they may hope in freedom. It is for us to make this plain.

C. G. PAULDING.

What Color Is That White Collar, Mr. Durkin?

EVERY ONCE in a while, for the past ten years or so, I have heard someone say that the next surge in the evolution of American society would come about when the white collar workers of this country finally struck out against the pallid misery of their situation. On such occasions, I have invariably agreed, although I have never given the possibility much further thought and have always presumed that the tremors of unrest which indicate an urge toward unionization on the grand and threatening scale would, in the case of American white collar workers, be a long time in coming. Consequently, I was delighted, a few days ago, to accept a lunchtime invitation to a meeting sponsored by the United Office and Professional Workers, the organization whose local chapter is sponsoring the unusually lusty strike which is now swirling around the doors of the Brooklyn Trust Company, beneath the unsympathetic gaze of both the directors of that bank and a regiment of patrolmen from the New York City Police Department.

As the guilding force behind what, as far as I know, is the only certified bank employees' strike going on in the United States at this moment, I felt that the officers of the UOPWA would surely have available a variety of late news on the progress of the Brooklyn strike and, perhaps, even some up-to-date estimates on the coming victory of American clerical workers. They had both, but after spending two hours and ten minutes in UOPWA circles I was forced to conclude that the white collar workers of this nation have about as much to hope for from the UOPWA under its current staff of leaders as they have from such people as Mr. George McLaughlin, president of the partially strike-bound Brooklyn Trust Company.

The UOPWA meeting was convened in a hotel of medium splendor and was preceded by a lunch which, at the table where I was seated, was quietly enjoyed by minor representatives of the *Brooklyn Eagle,* the New York *Journal-American,* the radio station WINS, and by a photographer who went unidentified. At the conclusion of the lunch, a mild-appearing little man, who subsequently introduced himself as Mr. Berney, head of the New York Chapter of the UOPWA, arose from his place at a centrally located table and tapped a spoon briskly against a glass of water.

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The gently tossing conversation died down and Mr. Berney, speaking in an unobtrusive white collar voice, outlined his purpose.

His own remarks, he said, would be merely introductory. The main speaker would be Mr. Durkin (he indicated a man seated at his left, head bowed in the traditional manner of an after dinner speaker waiting at the barrier), new president of the UOPWA, who would discuss the plight of the white collar worker in general and, following that, would have a few things to say about the background and progress of the Brooklyn Trust strike. At the conclusion of his speech, Mr. Durkin would also be quite happy to answer questions from the floor. Before resuming his seat, Mr. Berney outlined the UOPWA president's credentials (which included the information that Mr. Durkin could be said, in a way, to have risen from the ranks, since he had at one time been obscurely employed by a large insurance company) and introduced the remaining members of the party at his table, most of whom, with the exception of a dark, pleasant-looking lady identified as Mrs. Berney, turned out to be additional officers of either the local or the national UOPWA.

The president of the UOPWA was welcomed by light but sympathetic applause, and his appearance, even more than Mr. Berney's, strengthened the impression that the hounded little group at the speakers' table symbolized the great forgotten segment of the American middle class, its members quivering mildly under their oppression, appalled yet determined before the vision of their approaching power. Mr. Durkin was wearing a white shirt, a tie of no particular pattern, and the kind of tan light-weight suit which was being worn that day by at least every fifth male urban worker who passed beneath the windows of the hotel dining-room where Mr. Durkin was speaking. He was slim and pale, wore glasses, had an amount of lank brown hair that was just a few years away from being called thin, and spoke in a voice which, if possible, was a beat less forceful than Mr. Berney's.

Mr. Durkin opened by paying public tribute to the determination displayed by the untried pickets who had been assigned to outdoor duty in the neighborhood of the Brooklyn Trust. "These boys and girls" he called them. Then, shifting to historical summary—as Mr. Berney had predicted he would—Mr. Durkin sped into a description of white collar life during the past century. It was extremely cheerless, a point which Mr. Durkin emphasized by reading to his audience a brief passage (something by Charles Dickens, I gathered; Scrooge was mentioned) dealing with the life of an English clerk in the ninetteenth century. ("Perhaps I should say 'clark' here," Mr. Durkin said at one point, relieving for a moment the atmosphere of depressing economic inequality that he and Dickens had been building up in the room.) The point was that the pattern of white collar life hadn't changed very much.

To prove that it hadn't, Mr. Durkin asked his listeners to regard, for a moment, the man seated at his left, one of the striking employees of the Brooklyn Trust. While the audience examined that gentleman with sympathy and curiosity, and while the subject himself—a short, markedly tidy fellow somewhat on the Thomas Dewey type, whose name I didn't catch—listened without flinching, Mr. Durkin ran quickly through the man's case history, a horrifying story of financial descent particularly memorable for a description of the fellow, accompanied by his wife and children, hurtling completely helpless through empty economic space, plunging from the eminence (for those days) of a twenty-four hundred dollar a year salary down to a sickening halt at an annual earning of less than twelve hundred, all the while clawing desperately for the support of a union which, at the time—the early nineteen thirties—did not exist. By the time Mr. Durkin had finished the anecdote and was off on a renewed discussion of white collar misery in the abstract, most of the members of his audience were looking stern and revolutionary.

Back on more general ground, Mr. Durkin declared that, in his opinion, the white collar movement was on the verge of its great sweep; from an organizing point of view, it looked like 1937 and 1938 all over again. While his listeners were thinking that over, Mr. Durkin began an explanation of the reasons for the strike against the Brooklyn Trust.

They were numerous and convincing. As evidence of the kind of people the bank strikers were up against, Mr. Durkin read from a letter written by Mr. George McLaughlin, president of the Brooklyn Trust Company, and addressed to the employees of its banks. Mr. McLaughlin suggested that his employees write to their Congressmen urging passage of the income tax law which, at the time of Mr. McLaughlin's letter, was being debated by the Eightieth Congress. Passage of the law would be in the best interests of the nation, Mr. McLaughlin had assured his employees. After reading the letter, Mr. Durkin added a postscript which the president of the Brooklyn Trust had somehow neglected to include: passage of the proposed income tax law would have meant a saving of about sixteen thousand dollars a year to Mr. McLaughlin, while to most of his employees it would not have meant quite so much; something around an annual forty dollars apiece, in fact.

The audience responded to Mr. Durkin's postscript with a burst of sardonic laughter. A few minutes later, after listing even further justifications of the strike for the benefit of anyone who

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might have remained dubious (Here, or perhaps it was earlier in the discussion, a Catholic priest was quoted as saying that he was for it.), Mr. Durkin thanked his audience and resumed his place between Mr. Berney and the bank clerk whose life story had recently been made known to everyone present. The applause was intense.

Mr. Berney took over briefly, made a few light remarks about the relationship between a bank clerk's salary and the fulsome meal we had all enjoyed that day, and said that Mr. Durkin was ready for questions.

It was at this point—a few seconds after Mr. Durkin had arisen for the questions—that I parted emotional company with the president of the UOPWA, and although the meeting had been interesting enough in every phase, I am particularly sorry that the pickets at the Brooklyn Trust, as well as any other troubled white collar workers who are considering the attractions of life in the UOPWA, were not on hand to watch Mr. Durkin just then.

The first few questions were mainly statistical and Mr. Durkin answered them efficiently and in full. His difficulties, and the emotional dissolution of everything he had said before, began when a journalist seated at one of the side tables said that he had with him a copy of *The Labor Leader*, a publication issued by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, and would like to read a passage from it. The passage contained this sentence: "If there was any question of Merrill's [Mr. Durkin's predecessor as head of the UOPWA] loyalty to the Communist Party, there is certainly no question of Durkin's." The journalist wondered if Mr. Durkin would like to comment on that sentence. The new president of the UOPWA didn't say that he would like to, but he did begin to talk, and for the first time since I had been looking at Mr. Durkin his normal pallor gave way to a pronounced flush. He said that he had seen that article, and that he was also aware of another article in the same issue of *The Labor Leader*—one which attacked UOPWA tactics in the Brooklyn Trust strike. He denounced such journalism as veritable strike-breaking and expressed great contempt for those who would divide the workingman against himself.

At the conclusion of Mr. Durkin's outburst against strike-breaking, the journalist who had asked the original question thanked him for all he had said but wondered if it would not be a good idea—now that the question of strike-breaking was out of the way—to return to the original question: Was Mr. Durkin in any way affiliated with the Communist Party? A yes or no answer would do, he said.

While Mr. Durkin was gathering his forces for a yes or no answer, Mr. Berney arose and shouted that Communism was not an issue in the Brooklyn strike. Mr. Durkin, apparently refreshed as a result of the interlude provided by Mr. Berney's unscheduled remarks, then cried out against the bad manners, the lack of good form, the complete failure of taste demonstrated by anyone who asked such questions. Like strike-breaking, it was also contemptible.

At about this point, I noticed that the meeting was beginning to give way around the edges. The man from radio station WINS, who had been sitting next to me, was gone, and the representative of the *Journal-American*, grinning, was gathering up his notes. By the time I got up to go, at around ten minutes past two, Mr. Berney and Mr. Durkin, their faces glowing with the fine healthy radiance normally found only among rank-and-filers of the American Seamen's Union, had given up their practice of addressing the meeting separately and were both talking at once. "He is; he isn't; izzee or izn'tee," Mr. Berney was snarling, "Communism is not an issue in this strike." "I'll sue for libel if you call me a Republican," I heard Mr. Durkin saying as I neared the door. The answering chuckle was feeble. "Why, some people even call Senator Taft a Socialist!" roared Mr. Berney.

Things may have changed later on, but by ten minutes past two, when I finally went out the door, those who remained at the meeting were still waiting for that yes or no answer.

JOHN BRODERICK.

City Dawn

Sweet dawn, sweet dawn, that corroborates all fable:
All we wanted in fairytale, is true.
Remember the scenes: squires Maying under the pennoned castle?
Grass is that green, heaven that storybook blue.

No domes of Mecca here, those rainbow bubbles.
No tricks of Gothic lightning amazing the sky.
But families shout in the clouds, and Sunday pavements
Broader than ballrooms of any Louis lie.

Or is it not steel, not stone, but our own blood
Filling these shapes, as air the vivid balloon?
Raising the intricate skyline miles away,
Floating even the sun toward hover of noon?

Over coffee and fruit such assurance of power
That the heart and the tear-ducts choke: too much delight—
Returned to the world of solids and positive tread
After the howling mirrors, the chutes and loons of the night.

Though the morning paper cries black and squarely Woe
As planes lock, senators jangle, cottages bobble in flood,
There gathers a joy that is not quite lost all day
As we prove *to be, to know* in our warm blood.

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS.

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Leon Bloy

Anne Fremantle

"I WRITE BOOKS which will live, but which do not bring me a living," bitterly wrote Léon Bloy, who now, 101 years after his birth, enjoys an international reputation far greater than any accorded him during his lifetime.

Bloy must be seen and judged in the framework of his era. For this savage Jeremiah, who was born in 1846 and died in 1917, is essentially a nineteenth century character. A most unpleasing person, rude, vulgar, angry and impertinent, he yet was, indubitably, a member of the "goodly fellowship of the prophets." As mocked at as Elisha, as stoned as any seer in Israel, he was avenged by bigger and better bears than any of his predecessors. For his awful warnings to his beloved France came true to the letter. And it would seem that this rough, tough, disagreeable creature was as necessary to the economy of salvation as a gadfly or a porcupine is to that of nature.

Born the second of the seven sons of a minor functionary in the "Ponts et Chaussées," Bloy dubbed his atheist father "a shrivelled little bourgeois" and hated him, while loving his melancholy, pious, Spanish mother with as simple an Oedipus-complex as any Freud himself ever invented. His father never saw in Léon anything but a sluggard, and spanked him with a Spartan firmness which was, Bloy declared, fruitless, "because he never followed up his thrashings with a return to tenderness which would have intellectualized their sting." High school was hell "already dulled by fear, held in contempt by the other children whose high sprits I could not stand, punished without let-up and beaten by everyone, I ended by falling into a silent disgust with life which made me seem a simpleton." He could not imagine any state less horrible: the world, for Bloy at fourteen, was an endless garbage heap into which he had fallen from an unremembered oblivion. Human beings were vermin. And such, at forty, was still his conception of human society.

A bilious complexion, a "rustic face," whose atavistic boorishness "had not yet had time to wage its last battle against an invading intelligence," with bleary, mild, blue eyes that turned black with rage, such was the physiognomy of the young volunteer, who, one night when on advance sentry duty during the war of 1870, read the New Testament through for the first time, and had the "tremendous, thundering apperception of a divine revelation. A double abyss opened up, starting from that prodigious moment. An abyss of desire and fury that nothing was ever again to fill. Here, the essential Glory, never to be reached; there, the tides of human swinishness, never to be ended." This almost physical perception of an intimate, absolute dichotomy never left him. In one of his last books—"La Porte des Humbles"—written during World War I, he describes the experience of Communion (and he was a daily communicant for over thirty years) in the following terrifying terms.

"I am going to Communion. The priest has uttered the fearful words which a fleshly piety calls consoling: *Domine, non sum dignus.* Jesus is about to come. In a moment He will be under my roof. I do not recall having swept clean this dwelling wherein He will enter as a king or as a thief . . . indeed, have I ever swept it clean, my dwelling-place of unchasteness and carnage? I dare not look into the dark corners. In the last shadowy places I behold awful spots, old, or new, which remind me that I have slaughtered innocents, and in what numbers, with what cruelty! My walls are alive with vermin and trickling with cold droplets; and look, there, before that ghastly door, who is that squatting monster whom I had not noticed until now, and who resembles the creature I have sometimes glimpsed in my mirror? Ah, truly it takes God not to fear entering such a house. And here He is, how shall I greet Him, and what shall I say or do? Absolutely nothing. Even before He may have crossed my threshold I shall have ceased thinking about Him, I shall no longer be there. I shall have disappeared. I shall be infinitely far away, among the images of creatures."*

In his two great biographical novels, *"Le Désespéré* and *"La Femme Pauvre,"* Bloy mercilessly describes himself both before and after his conversion. There was no more tranquillity than in the days of hatred and revolt. The difference was that after "my anguish runs in a straight line . . . I have been given terror. It is a dreadful gain." Conversion, indeed, is hardly a word Bloy finds adequate to express his catastrophe. "Someone, stronger than he, had seized him by the throat, and carried him into a

*These quotations are taken from "Pilgrim of the Absolute," a selection made by Raïssa Maritain from Bloy's works, with an introduction by Jacques Maritain, translated by H. L. Binsse, and published by the Pantheon Press, which sells for $3.50.

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house of fire. His soul had been torn out of him, and his bones crushed. He had been flayed, trepanned, burnt; he had been reduced to putty, and flung headfirst into a confessional, whose boards creaked under his weight."

It is not always easy to realize that it is not necessarily the loveliest natural character that is the best raw material of sanctity. We must start from where we are, with what we have: and we only have what we were given. The human loveliness, the moral sweetness of a Teresa of Lisieux are so much more appetizing than the ugly, botched, sex-pricked complex that was Saul before the Damascene vision, or than the growling curmudgeon that was Saint Jerome, or than the sores of the almost mentally deficient Saint Benedict Labre, that it is easy to forget that sanctity must be achieved "in spite of" natural advantages no less than of natural disadvantages. Of him to whom much has been given, much will be required. Bloy was given very little. Only, perhaps, the gifts of tears and of rage. He was born sad, as some are born left-handed. When he was still a small child (he told his fiancée), his mother often found him sitting silently, bathed in tears, weeping for hours without ascribable motive. "A boundless melancholy, both natural and supernatural, weighed on him," M. Maritain tells us, and Bloy was also both possessed by, and of, a "noble rage" that he himself declared was "the effervescence of my pity" but which, none the less, gave scandal to many in his lifetime, and shocks many of his readers even now. His blistering fury against the bourgeois, which made him rejoice in an unforgivable way over the fire at a charity bazaar, his passionate love-hate for poverty, which made him see a terrible parallel between money and the blood of Christ, his hatred of democracy "a degenerate opinion"; of mediocrity "who puts her elephant feet on my heart"; of respectable women "frightening arid cows," are all obstacles to his public as they were to him. Yet those he insulted most needed—and used—him most. And the scandal he said, and gives, must be weighed against all the good he did: "men and women have asked for baptism after having read me"—what assurance that fact was to Bloy—and all the good he wished to do.

In an age of rhetoric and of cloying sweetness, of parlor priests and drawing-room pieties, Bloy's sense of justice, his essentially virile and right attitude and his truthfulness, stand out, cry out, trumpet forth. He saw so clearly the difference between poverty and misery—how the one is holy, the other only horrible. His vision of the communion of saints was of an infallible balance, by which Christendom is the whole suffering and the whole sharing of all in all. Always he refused to justify only the rich man, who for him was necessarily and deliberately outside the otherwise all-inclusive network of the Divine plan. Yet he would not have the poor remain poor, so that our charity might find exercise—he would agree with Saint Augustine, who said "you give bread to one who is hungry; but it were better that none hungered and you gave to none. The love you have for one who is happy, whom you can in no wise oblige, is more authentic, more pure, and far more real." For Bloy hated patronage above all and Eric Gill echoes him when he wrote "when we speak of poverty we do not mean evil poverty, destitution, nakedness, starvation, homelessness, the evil poverty of those who are deprived of the just necessities of living."

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It was in 1877, some years after his conversion, when he had abandoned both his original idea of becoming a painter, and the apprenticeship to an architect with which he compromised between this desire and his father's insistence that he should have a profession, that, after several ineffectual attempts to make good in journalism or literature, Bloy obtained work as a railway employee. It was at this time also that he first met the heroine of both his novels, Anne Marie Roulé, a seamstress from Brittany who eked out her pitiful earnings by prostitution. Bloy, long after her conversion, could still describe "the embrace of her heavy lips, bestially exquisite, which shattered the nerves, softened the very marrow of the bones, and deranged the minds of her lovers." She was locally called "The Leech," and was the first woman whom Bloy, at 31, had ever known.

But hardly had he fallen than, as Emanuela Polimeni points out, in her "Leon Bloy, the Pauper Prophet" (Dennis Dobson, 6/s), "he was seized with the impulse to rescue her at any rate from the attention of others, and to make her give up her former way of living. Anne Marie, in her turn, fell violently in love with the man she gratefully looked upon as her savior." The whole touching, and very heroic, story is told both in Bloy's two novels and in his "Letters to Veronica," published in 1935 by Jacques Maritain. The two young people, tremendously in love with each other, gradually and painfully transformed their mutual passion into an even greater passion for Someone else. There were terrible falls, for even communicating together could not always keep them from each other's arms. Over and over again, Bloy writes hopefully, "as we shall have received God in the morning I am sure we will be good and able to talk quietly like brother and sister"—only to write next day that because of what actually happened, they were forbidden to meet, except in church. A year later Bloy, pretexting some other excuse, fled from Anne Marie to La Trappe, only to find

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there, both that he had no vocation and that the shame of abandoning Anne Marie, so to speak "plantée la," was eating into his heart, whilst she was literally so hungry that she thought strongly of eating her two pet cats. He returned to Paris to find she had preceded him in holiness: it was she, now, who refused him, refused even to marry him, because she wished to live a life of contemplation. She and Bloy lived now in what Emanuela Polimini calls "an orgy of piety": Bloy had given up his profession too, and both spent their days in prayer and in the study of the Bible. Anne Marie began to see visions, and his friend Ernest Hello and Bloy would work on her, getting her into a veritable frenzy, in order to obtain from her an interpretation of various passages in Scripture. She made Bloy think he was predestined to be a martyr; and promised him that he should live to see the fulfilment of "an amazing secret, the nature and content of which he was never to divulge." Bloy certainly thought of himself thereafter as chosen by God to be a "latter-day apostle," and speaks of himself as awaiting "the Cossacks and the Holy Ghost." No one was more surprised than he at his own peaceful death. As he lay dying a friend asked him "What do you feel?" and he replied "An immense curiosity."

First Anne Marie's sight, and then her reason, gave way. For four months Bloy concealed her condition, living shut up with her, with no resources, cold, hungry, and threatened by Anne Marie, "writing under the threat of fire and knife and famine and despair articles at a half-penny a line." He could not go out on the street, because his clothes were in the pawnshop: it was under these conditions that *"Le Désespéré"* was written. And what a novel it is! As savage and as simple as "Of Human Bondage"—but a far richer book, because grown in the warm mulct of nineteen centuries of Christian suffering, instead of in the stingy soil of a couple of hundred years of doubt eroding into disbelief. Consider the splendid denunciation of the priest who shuts the grille of his confessional to Veronica; or the description of the 80-year-old Jesuit who opens his "because I only fish big fish" . . . who thought that habitual sins of the flesh were above all *"une névrose d'enfantillage, à la verité terrible et mortelle, mais intraitable sans l'attractive bénignité d'une sorte de lactation prophylactique."*

But *"Le Désespéré"* brought its author neither cash nor kudos. Soon Anne Marie was put into an asylum, and Bloy never saw her again though she lived for another twenty-odd years. The following seven years were the bitterest in Bloy's life. His next mistress died of tetanus; he had few friends and not enough money to keep from starving—Emauela Polimeni well describes his first meeting with his fiancée, Jeanne Molbech, the daughter of a Danish poet. Bloy was sitting in a corner of Francois Coppée's dining-room, devouring a crust of bread which he was dipping into a glass of wine given him by Coppée's old servant. He had just returned from the funeral of his friend the poet, Villiers de l'Isle Adam.

During the year of his betrothal, Bloy wrote the *"Letters to His Fiancée,"* whose publication Mme. Bloy permitted in 1921. They are wonderfully revealing, showing Bloy to have been a character strangely like Salvador Dali as the latter describes himself in his autobiography. Both have the same sadness, the same violence; both are convinced of their mission, that they are chosen by God for some terrible and august purpose. But beside these messianic complexes, both are artists, excruciatingly more sensitive than other men, with skins less tough than their fellows, Marsyas-flayed daily on what to most of us are pin points. In spite of their seemingly so different destinies—Dali to be immensely successful, commercially so, no less than artistically, Bloy all his life to be abysmally poor and unrecognized, except by a tiny coterie of devoted friends—both inspired the same devotion in their wives.

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Abert Béguin, in his "Léon Bloy: a Study in Impatience," translated by Edith Riley (Sheed & Ward) studies four of the aspects of Léon Bloy as seer. Béguin discusses Bloy's insistence on suffering, his views on poverty and money, his attitude towards the Jews, and his position regarding the symbolism of history. This is by far the most profound study of Bloy that has as yet appeared, for Stanislas Fumet's *"Mission De Léon Bloy,"* immensely valuable as it is, does not pretend to cover such a wide field. Perhaps the essay on "The People of Israel" is, of his four, M. Béguin's most significant. How God must enjoy, Bloy sarcastically observes, daily hearing His Mother and His cousins despised and calumniated! "How can my books be anything but apologies for the Jews," Bloy wrote to an anti-Semitic lady, "when each morning I eat a Jew, when my God is a Jew, and I have pinned my whole hope of salvation to a bunch of Yids?" For Bloy, the present monstrous state of Christendom is largely due to the attitude of Christians to the poor and to the Jews. For these things must be, but woe to those through whom such scandal cometh! To Bloy, as to Bernanos, "everything is Grace" and history is simply the working out of the designs of Providence at our level. "The visible is the trace of the footsteps of the invisible"; and two worlds "are strangely one." Whether the appearance of Our Lady to Mélanie at La Salette, in 1846, the year of Bloy's birth, and Anne Marie's, and her warnings, are as important to the world as they were to Bloy, is a matter

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of opinion, but there can be no doubt of Bloy's own prophetic gifts. Never, for example, did he for a moment think of the 1914-18 war as being the one he foretold. This is what he wrote in 1916: "The peace which will follow will not be long. Twenty-five years of abundant harvests will make people forget that it is the sins of mankind which cause all the miseries that occur on earth." The Germans are not yet bad enough; 60 millions of them will be far more formidable, before the Cross of Christ triumphs over the Iron Cross. Bloy had also profoundly the conviction that *"chacun de nous est certainement responsable de l'abomination actuelle."* And he foresees the roads of France cluttered with those flying from the horrors—and neither horses nor bicycles nor cars being swift enough to save. He foresaw "one" who would conquer all Europe, and set himself up in the place of God, in whose name his followers would destroy churches. M. Béguin points out how Bloy always "spoke in the absolute." Yet, when he came to the end of his life, he is shaken with terror, because "I have not done what God wanted of me, that's sure. I have dreamt, on the contrary, of what I wanted from God, and here I am, at sixty-eight, with nothing in my hands but paper."

Bloy's sureness of literary judgment was amazing in his day and age. He, almost alone, defended Paul Verlaine as a Catholic: his praise of *"Sagesse"* is wonderfully done. Baudelaire he saw as a *"Catholique à rebours"*; he understood the sufferings both of Rimbaud and Rouault. He was godfather to Raissa and to Jacques Maritain, who have never ceased to venerate him. In England, Eric Gill seems his most immediate successor. For both, "the most incomprehensible thing in the world is the patience of the poor." Gill's language and sentiments are similar to Bloy's. "The indecency of sprawling wens like London" rouses Gill's rage, and he asserts that "Nature, red in tooth and claw, is as much in accord with God's will as small children singing hymns. God is not refined, and would have agreed with Bloy that "Sentimentality is to have compassion for the executioners of Jesus Christ. Poor people! so badly paid, and for so much wearisome toil."

But when Bloy lashed out "at the spectacle of a Church, once poised above the constellations and cathedraling on the forehead of seraphim, now so fallen, flattened, tottering, cast so prodigiously down, that she is no longer able to distinguish between those who venerate her, and those who infect," he was not only looking forward to Gill's denunciations, but back to John Chrysostom: "We live in so depraved an age, that were a stranger to compare the words of the Gospel with what in fact goes on, he would infer that men are not the followers of Christ but His enemies, and the worst is, that they do not know it!" ("Treatise on Compunction and Penance," 375 A.D.)

There is always the problem of over-emphasis, for, as Saint François de Sales said, to exaggerate a virtue often means to over-step it—courage becomes foolhardiness; hope, presumption; generosity, spendthriftiness. Only charity can never be practiced to excess. Bloy could not appreciate Saint François de Sales; "from head to foot, the Church was stickied from his honey, perfumed by his seraphic pomades," but, on the other hand, Bloy's own coarseness was a necessary reaction from the overdose of sweetness from which the age of Viollet-le-Duc suffered. Yet that sweetness in its turn, was a necessary reaction from the aridities of Jansenism. But our generation is still in far greater need of the curry-comb than of soothing syrup: today we need Bloy as a mustard plaster, and nothing but Bloy will do—vaseline alternatives cannot help us. For our Faith today is susceptible to two great dangers, for both of which Bloy is a most salutary corrective. As Father D'Arcy has most wonderfully emphasized, we are in danger on the one hand of creeping into Gnostic corners, curtaining ourselves off from the Hoi Poloi, with a Holier-than-Thou smugness, or, on the other hand we are in danger of letting our faith become merely a smear of faintly rancid butter on the daily bread of life, politics and "reality"; that dismal trinity: either an atavistic or a sentimental smear, vaguely pleasant but entirely pointless. Bloy, with every word he ever wrote, denied both these heresies. For "Nothing is true save what is Absolute," he said, and "There is but one sadness, and that is for us (for us *all,* of course) not to be saints."

Home Care

JULIETTA K. ARTHUR

LAST January Montefiore Hospital, the nation's largest voluntary hospital for the chronically ill, took a bold step. When the first group of twenty-eight patients were sent back to Harlem and the Bronx it was with the promise that they would be given the equivalent of full hospital care in their own homes. At the end of six months—just one-half of what was designed to be an experimental year—Montefiore's Department of Home Care is hailed by enthusiasts as feasible in many other hospitals.

The formula itself is not new. In New York State's just completed report* (to be presented to the next legislature) strong arguments empha-

*Planning for the Care of the Chronically Ill in New York State, Special Report of the New York State Commission to Formulate a Long Range Health Program, May, 1947.

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size the fact that if they can get the right kind of medical and nursing care, the majority of the chronically sick are able to live comparatively useful and normal lives at home. The Massachusetts and Connecticut health plans, to name only two in the making, visualize extensive visiting nurse and housekeeper services for chronic patients outside of hospitals. And in New York State itself, a few years ago, hospital externes, students, and nurses participated in a demonstration which proved that the number of re-admissions to a hospital, or even the re-occurrence of acute episodes of an ailment could be prevented by the right kind of home care. But nowhere has the plan been tried with the thoroughness which characterizes the Montefiore project in New York.

How it works and how much of the plan can be adopted elsewhere is bound to be important. Willy-nilly, we all have to help bear the enormous community expense of chronic diseases which for the great mass of victims are either the cause or the result of poverty. For 23,000,000 of us any solution, however limited, is even more vital. Bled white, physically and economically, they are that one-sixth of our nation who suffer from the six leading long-term diseases—rheumatism, heart disorders, hardening of the arteries and high blood pressure, the kidney diseases, cancer, and diabetes.

For seventeen years Dr. E. M. Bluestone, director of Montefiore, battled to prove his contention that a hospital bed is not necessarily the natural habitat of a sick person. When he succeeded this year in getting a modest grant—$25,000 from the New York Cancer Committee and $5,000 from the Greater New York Fund—he had a chance to put his theories to work. With half a year to go, its backers declare the experimental period is over. So far the Department of Home Care can point to these positive results:

1. Emotional difficulties of many patients who simply cannot thrive—or even will to live—outside their family circle, can be eliminated. In some cases the results have amounted to a minor clinical miracle. Mr. P., for instance, was a bookkeeper in an advanced stage of diabetes. For most of four years he was moved from one hospital bed to another. In his brief intervals at home his wife seemed unable to manage either his special diet or his injections. In Montefiore's ward Mr. P. was a perennial "worrier." He fretted especially because his only son, an adolescent, was "running wild." Five months ago Mr. P. was turned over to Dr. Martin Cherasky, the head of the Department of Home Care. The Visiting Nurse taught Mr. P.'s wife to give insulin properly, and the hospital social worker helped plan her budget and Mr. P.'s diet. Finally, she aided the boy to find work. His authority restored, Mr. P. surprised Dr. Cherkasky on one of his regular visits by announcing he had found an easy, clerical job. He is still on it.

2. For every patient treated at home a hospital bed can be freed for someone to take his place. In the first quarter of this year the Department accepted thirty-nine men and women. Even with this small number, a total of 1,879 days of hospital care was saved. More than 85 percent of the Home Care patients now come from the cancer ward. In Montefiore, as elsewhere, the waiting list is long and slow-moving. No one can calculate how many lives were lengthened by giving men and women in the early stages of cancer a chance to secure the treatment they cannot get outside a hospital, while there is still sometimes a chance to hope.

3. The cost of giving hospital care at home is two-thirds less than maintaining the same patient in a ward. This includes not only a fulltime physician's regular calls on the same basis as if he were in private practice (on an average, twice a week, and available around-the-clock in an emergency), but professional nursing and housekeeping aid and specialists' attention whenever necessary. So far the record shows everything has been furnished from a hospital bed to an ambulance to and from the hospital for X-ray or radium treatments. On its financial count alone the Montefiore plan merits national attention.

Hospitals today are one of the country's twelve major industries. We are taxed approximately $9.00 per capita for annual operating outlay without taking into account new hospital construction or expansion costs. Moreover, the public is rapidly learning to use a hospital not merely out of dire necessity but in every serious illness, while hospital beds grow scarcer and administrators demand that rates must go up and even ward service be charged at cost.

Montefiore's ability to take the home under its wing at one-third the cost of keeping the chronic patient in a hospital bed is at least a partial way out. It is the long-term ill who suffer from the prevalent attitude of "Off with their heads!" which too often dumps the excess load into a custodial institution—usually only a polite name for an alms-house.

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Mrs. E., the Department of Home Care's first patient, has run the gamut of service, yet the cost of maintaining her in her own four-room walk-up is $3.50 a day, as against three times that in the ward. The average patient's stay at Montefiore is six months. Mrs. E. has been on the Department's rolls for seven, and is likely to remain there. The hospital bed she would have occupied has been meeting someone else's urgent need for 210 hospital days.

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Mrs. E. is a prize example of the generally accepted medical thesis that a person with a long-term illness who is in a sympathetic home environment is far less likely to develop either cross infections or a vegetative existence than in a hospital. Provided, that is, there is ready access to diagnostic and specialists' services of high quality, regardless of expense.

The final decision is made, first, on the basis of need. Can the hospital do anything more for these patients who must still have medical and nursing attention? Will their going home be deleterious to themselves or to any member of their household? Is there resentment at the extra burden, or warmth and tenderness to compensate for hard days?

For those fearful few to whom the hospital's long shelter has brought either apathy or apprehension, one of three social workers attached to the Home Care staff gives reassurance. Every patient knows he has a priority on return to a hospital bed if his condition should demand it. Physical requirements in his home at the least must be a single bed, preferably a room, and the welcome eager.

Mrs. E.'s husband, a night subway worker, poured out in voluble, liquid Spanish his assurances. There were children but neighbors would help. He, too, would always be at hand. Dr. Cherkasky was willing. Complications arose, however. The first week Mrs. E. was home a surgeon had to be called to tap her for quarts of liquid. The Visiting Nurse reported the whole household cooperative, Mrs. E. cheerful and beloved. She had one wish. She wanted to see a moving picture, not in a hospital auditorium, but in a real theatre. When she left her sixth floor walk-up, with Dr. Cherkasky's permission, it was in her husband's arms. He still carries his eighty-pound wife up and down five flights of stairs.

If there is a bottle-neck which will prevent wide acceptance of the Montefiore plan, it lies in the national shortage of both professional nurses and domestic workers. In New York the Visiting Nurse Association cooperates where needed, and calls are made at the usual rates. However, physicians believe that ancillary personnel, such as practical nurses and even nurses' aides can be used, where they are available, for patients who do not require an experienced professional nurse. Montefiore has proved in more than one instance that a wife or husband cannot only give loving care but learn the most disagreeable and arduous phases of nursing.

The "Good Neighbor" system has been an effective complement to visiting housekeeping service where families must have it. Since the whole Department of Home Care functions for the benefit of the needy, patients usually come from areas where housewives are glad to earn a bit doing housework for a neighbor (a plan which would be even more feasible in a smaller, friendlier community than New York).

A remarkable instance of the therapeutic value of this part-time help is in the case record of one frail, bed-bound young woman who lives in Harlem—alone. During her long months in the hospital she mourned her only interest, her tiny apartment, painfully established. Although the word "incurable" is never heard at Montefiore, she is and always will be a very sick woman. But visits from the doctor, the nurse, and most of all, with the neighbors while they do all her housework, keep her cheerful. "Just seeing other sick people in the ward made me worse!" she says.

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By June 30 fifty-seven patients had come under Home Care supervision over a period of six months. Of that number fifteen exercised their right to return when an acute episode of their disease developed. Of the five others who died, three could have come back, but their families longed to be with them during their last days. Home Care made it possible. Four others, on the upgrade, transferred to the Out-patient Department.

The numbers are not imposing. Montefiore is a 975-bed institution and Home Care is still an infinitesimal part of its complex program. Funds permit only part of the Bronx and Harlem to be covered. But Dr. Cherkasky visualizes the day when not only all the patients in Montefiore will be eligible as a matter of course, but when a central Home Care Department will be set up to embrace all the chronic patients in New York's entire hospital system. Meanwhile the case-load in the next six months will be materially increased with the addition of another fulltime physician. Like Dr. Cherkasky, he has the necessary experience and wide social vision.

A decade ago the National Health Survey proved that more than 58 percent of us who live to be sixty-five and over will suffer from some kind of chronic disease or its disability. A generation ago we might have shrugged that off with the observation we probably would never live to be that old. Today we cannot have that paradoxical comfort.

In April, 1947, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company announced that during the closing year of World War II life expectancy, for the first time in our history, reached nearly sixty-six years. In other words the chances of a newborn child to live longer have increased more than a third since 1900. They have nearly doubled since Paul Revere was chairman of Boston's first health department when the average life expectancy for a babe was only thirty-five.

Ironically, while we have postponed death by

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conquering the infectious diseases which in years past swept away young adults and children, the degenerative group still hits hardest men and women over fifty-five, that portion of our population steadily on the increase.

There can be no one panacea for so mighty a national problem. But Montefiore's Department of Home Care does point out one way to rout the most haunting spectre anybody can have with increasing age, the fear of being old and poor and struck down by a disease likely to require hospitalization not for weeks or months, but years.

The Stage & Screen

Summer Note

CERTAINLY on this shore (north of Boston) Art goes. From Marblehead to Skowhegan, if you are not threatening the focus of the scolding terns, you are sure to be wasting the view for some Sunday painter: there is hardly a lonely rock. And theater doings are as stern. A glance at the weekly listings seems to pin a playhouse every inch of the seaboard map and inland, upland, mountainy, and just plain Western resorts are crowded. Such organizations as Margo Jones's Dallas Repertory, now sponsored by ANTA, mark the first intelligent efforts to decentralize stage affairs and if the large percentage of new work on allover view means anything at all, it points to younger more daring management and encouraged writers. There is, to be sure, the apocryphal tale of the barn producer who could consent to Maxwell Anderson's "Joan" being scheduled *only* if played by A Scandinavian. But that, let us underline, *is* apocryphal and looks like the rule's exception. Mr. Anderson's piece has lately been done at the Ogunquit Playhouse, and I was interested to watch Judith Evelyn's work in the part. The house is one of the most comfortable; the audience as muslin, cool, tanned, and serious as one could wish; the company intelligent. With its no-set, small-trapping scheme, the play is of course a natural for summer progress and as far as one can see is to be interpreted throughout the union as many times as there are actresses—Nordic or not. I thought the business extremely plain on second view, intellectually over-simplified. The idea of a modern player assuming, or better, struggling to assume, the saint is still an honest idea. It is simply that its examination seems even more superficial than the theater as a form deserves. This finding may be the result of Miss Evelyn's attack, although I do not judge so. However, in respect of her intelligence and high skill (both formidable: she is always responsible as well as wonderfully attractive), it is hard to understand her over-curled, artificial coiffure and strange through-the-nose sophistication in the part. But to the credit of all, it must be stated that the Maine audiences have unquestionably got the piece entire, with even a few discoveries. I thought Paul Fielding's "Dauphin" a decided improvement on the Broadway original, for instance. Ogunquit's future plans also look useful: there is the Robinson Jeffers "Dear Judas"—Bach music, Engel arrangements, Johnson mountings—this week, and Lillian Gish in a Coward piece soon arriving.

In a way, the fun and enjoyment of the summer business is not so much from the country further into the country, but rather right out of any town, across bridges, with dinner on the way and (yes) extra wrappings against the journey home. Week nights, out of New York, I should certainly head for Easthampton where Jimmy Shelton's new revue is evidently being held and held; for Westport, where currently Fritzi Scheff and Estelle Winwood (golly!) are certainly adjusting the community; even as far as Bucks County, whatever they may be doing. And New Milford, Conn., is to have a Menotti the week of the 27th. A good deal of good work is being tried these evenings and I think surprises as well as a breeze should be the venturer's portion.

KAPPO PHELAN.

A for Color

IF YOU READ the book and saw the play, you may find getting Mr. Day baptized again rather strenuous. But if you're approaching *"Life With Father"* for the first time, you will probably be delighted with the movie version and may even be thoroughly charmed with this New York family which had such a difficult time with the nominal Head of the House. While I enjoyed the original stories by Clarence Day, Jr., I was not too greatly impressed by the play which stemmed from them. Terrible-tempered Father may be fun to watch on the stage but would be awful to live with, and if one considers the situations at all realistically much of the fun evaporates. I must be wrong about this, however, because the play broke all records; and the movie, which has been exceedingly well done, may run even longer.

All this goes back to the 80's when Father and practically everyone else complained because chicken had gone up to eight cents a pound. Of course Father complains about so many things that although Mother and the four boys seem to take him seriously, they have a way of placating him and usually get what they want. Naturally there is something to be said for Father's side of the story too—for Mother is inclined to be a little light-headed, particularly on such subjects as economics and mathematics, and the four young red-headed Days are, after all, boys with all the energies and aspirations of typical young males. Producer Robert Buckner has cast and set his film with care; the whole is bathed in handsome Technicolor that gives the film a richer quality than the play. It comes somewhat as a surprise, as is so often the case, to see familiar actors in familiar rôles about which we have preconceived ideas; but William Powell is properly dogmatic and stuffy as Mr. Day (and as soft as mush when Mother is ill and the house is like a tomb); and Irene Dunne is quite lovely as Vinnie, the understanding wife and mother whose sense of humor saves many a situation that would drive a better balanced woman to drink. The four boys add considerably to the fun too, although I found the problems of the eldest

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(Jimmy Lydon) and his puppy-love affair with the pretty visitor (Elizabeth Taylor) belonging to a diluted Booth Tarkington school. Perhaps because the script is so faithful to the play, the film becomes rather static at times. Director Michael Curtiz tries to overcome this as best he can, and succeeds in the characterizations more than in the scenes of action. "Life With Father" is slow, but it's a pleasant and warm comedy and should provide a diverting excursion in nostalgia for those who don't take it too seriously.

The serious folk this week can mull over *"Black Narcissus,"* an English importation that is beautifully photographed in stunning Technicolor. But this film presents so many problems that are impossible to cover in one short review. Its story, based on the novel by Rumer Godden, is about a group of Anglican nuns who go to an almost inaccessible place in the Himalayas to open a school and hospital at the request of the local ruler. The failure of the mission is due to many causes: the exotic locale with its difficult climate, the natives who are bribed by the ruler to go to the nuns, the lack of understanding on the part of the nuns who are not too happy in their work, and mainly the disintegration of their organization. The whole film, perhaps without intention, seems sympathetic neither towards the nuns nor the natives; this attitude is emphasized in the characterization of the English agent (excellently portrayed by David Farrar) who flaunts his maleness and cynicism, and seems, except for the native mystic who never speaks, the only person content with his lot.

Obviously "Black Narcissus" was designed for a very specialized audience. Its appeal is strictly adult and somewhat precious. One wonders, in fact, why it was filmed on such an expensive scale, for Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger have produced and directed the picture in a lavish style. The sets are done with great care and the outdoor scenes of India are lovely. And the cast, which also includes Deborah Kerr, Flora Robson, Sabu, Jean Simmons and many others, is outstanding. But one also wonders what this movie is trying to say. It makes no pretense that these nuns, of whom several are frustrated and one is psychopathic, are typical; but at the same time the events, even in such a specialized case, are unpleasant to watch. I should be interested in knowing how Anglican nuns themselves have reacted to this extraordinary theme. If seen by the uninformed a film like "Black Narcissus" could do great harm. Although on an intellectual level far above "Abie's Irish Rose," the material in this new movie is just as dangerous. It is fortunate, since the film was made at all, that its appeal is limited to the intelligent moviegoer.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

The Labor Movement

AFL and CIO Discover the Co-ops

WITH a dramatic admission of past mistakes, the AFL last month went all out in urging its 7,500,000 members to do their buying in consumers' co-op stores. Such action, the Federation now maintains, is necessary to bring outlandish prices down to more sensible levels.

Not long ago the AFL, by its own admission in *Labor's Monthly Survey,* was saying that "the forces of competition would reduce prices when enough goods are produced to meet the demand. "But today," the article continues, a fine flush of indignation on its cheeks, "many factories are cutting production while prices hold at high levels. Spokesmen for government, industry and labor have repeatedly called for price cuts, showing that large volume production at low prices is the way to progress, but to no avail. . . . There has been no significant decline in the general level of either industrial or consumer prices this year." In the light of current boosts in the price of coal, steel and food, this is a prize understatement.

The old AFL thinking on prices was eloquently expressed last year by John L. Lewis at the labor-management fiasco called by President Truman in Washington. At that time John L. infuriated the CIO representatives and delighted the employers present by delivering a defense of the business man's right to charge whatever the traffic would bear, just as long as he split the take with labor.

Well, let's not imply that all AFL leaders thought that way. Lewis, for example, did not want price control even during wartime. The official AFL line on price control was strongly in favor until after the war, when it suddenly collapsed just before Truman threw in his own hand in the face of three aces showing for the business interests. (The aces were: 1) a fat majority in Congress, 2) the meat shortage and 3) popular belief that price control was responsible. It might also be said that Truman himself had already handed the opposition another ace when he canceled rationing.)

At any rate, the AFL has now lost its faith in the sacred cows of a non-existent competition. It has seen, officially, that what determines prices in America is, by and large, not the law of supply and demand. That law is very useful when it can serve as an excuse for raising them. But when demand falls off, in altogether too many industries, prices do not go down. Why? Because a few bigshots get together in these industries and decide that they will keep prices up and cut production instead. What does it matter if workers must be laid off? Obviously, it does not matter at all.

In this article in *Labor's Monthly Survey* the AFL writer makes a great deal of the experience of American farmers in fighting the fertilizer industry with fertilizer

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co-ops. First the farmers got together, bought materials wholesale and made their own fertilizer at home for $20 a ton when the manufacturers were charging $38 a ton.

Later, they were able to buy their own factories. As a result of all this, the price of fertilizer went up 11 percent between March, 1946, and March, 1947, while the general level of wholesale prices for industrial products rose 28 percent in the same period.

"Almost every AFL member spends at least $800 a year on living necessities [about $6 billion a year in all—J. C. C.]. These dollars, spent in cooperative stores, will fight for fair prices and good quality. Our 7,500,000 members, buying in consumer cooperatives and saving in credit unions, can be an immense power for good."

So the AFL statement concludes with an appeal to its affiliated unions to work with the Cooperative League of the U. S. A. and the Credit Union National Association, both of which are run according to the best Rochdale principles. Elsewhere in the article the AFL had urged not only the increase of co-op stores and credit unions, but also of wholesale houses and factories. It would seem that they really mean business.

A few weeks later the CIO, always more sympathetic, published a similar appeal to its members in a special pamphlet prepared by its research department. Nothing is now wanting but some active response on the part of the 13,500,000 Americans represented in these two organizations.

American workers have always been optimistic in a crazy kind of a way. They don't like to pinch pennies, they don't like to walk an extra two blocks, they don't like to give up their own faith in the capitalist system. But even the optimists learn sooner or later. The coming depression might do it. JOHN C. CORT.

The Other News

ERNESTINE EVANS

NOT LONG AGO I suggested for the 11th time to a friend of mine who owns a small middle western newspaper (and is very rich) that there was need for vitamins in the news-fare he gave his readers. Why not try to organize some communications, well written detailed reportage, not between capitals but between provincial centers? NANA, the North American Newspaper Alliance, used to fill some need with single stories over oddly assorted datelines, but it is no longer a serious service, and it never did provide small papers with a sense of community with other countrysides.

Propaganda machines the world over operate from capitals and army headquarters; the consumers of propaganda, those who must be frightened, alerted, taxed and mobilized, are everywhere, and have much more in common, more need for universal peace, than the leaders who operate from the big centers. Why shouldn't they be given the chance to read something more than spot news of sports and politics, the better murders and lynchings, and the political promises of contenders for power? Why not questions and answers between Cardiff and Wilkes-Barre, Tours and Madison, Calgary and Jacksonville, Breslau and San Diego, or even the Aran Islands and Yorktown Heights? Actually the little weekly run by my friend Pauline Stanley out in Yorktown Heights gave me fresh zest for the notion.

A friend arriving in Paris, one of those intelligent and entertaining women with a mind as good as her heart, had written me a letter describing the devastation in the London dock region where her ship had landed, and also of Havre and Normandy. Pauline had made room among the local items, the births and deaths, Parent-Teachers meetings, and advertisements of local stores, together with the list of who visited whom over the week end, for two columns of my friend's personal letter. And what happened? The editor got more thanks for that vivid account of how things looked, that account of the hideous damage and the wreckage to be repaired by our side, than for any story she had run for years.

My friend from Kansas, of course, wrote back that what I suggested was impossible. He said it was the price of paper, and then laughed: "Last time I said it was the price of paper and I lied, but now it really is true," and he ran on about the price of paper.

The price of paper! The price of paper! The price of politics! Everywhere the lumberjacks are cutting down God's good trees and the pulp barons are soaking the editors and the editors are using the paper for what? The book publishers say they can't print books because of the price of paper. The advertisements in the newspapers get gaudier and bawdier, and the news gets spottier and spottier, blood red spots and black spots. Eric Johnson in press and on screen repeats himself monotonously about "the iron curtain." I think less said about "the iron curtain" and more admission that we all wear iron spectacles and submit to a press that is quack doctor for the disease that ails us, would be better. The press eliminates the past, scolds about the future, and does not let us see the present in terms of what the great mass of humanity does from day to day—and hopes, and prays for. Political events grow in no good soil, no common earth, under no common sky, and readers, most of the time, swig their newspapers as they might gin. But it seems to me there is no principle of physics making it impossible (physics is freshly and often revealed as having fewer impossibilities) to obtain better service and better diet from newspaper proprietors, and the editors and reporters and printers who are their hirelings. Myself, I would give up my vote for congressmen if I could poll and name the editor who was to give me what I want to read.

★

Two things I know I want. In city papers more news of the country, quietly written to make me see and feel the seasons, the flight of birds, the flow of rivers, the farmers who make my food. And in little country weeklies a place for writers, for all kinds of detailed reports from other nations, and above all for news of the past. To children, everything is news, and to most adults as well. I have never forgotten young Roderick five summers ago, rushing about the house, his eyes shining, not at all in his usual lackadaisical mood for getting off to school. "What's up? What's the hurry?" I shouted at him from the kitchen. "Today," he called back breathlessly, "we have Magellan." I am not at all sure that Roderick's sense of important news is not as worth considering as the scurry of the AP and the UP, those lords of answers to the question what IS news. I see no reason at all why the newsprint in little country weeklies, and even metropolitan news sheets, should not, as a sop (or as seed to our

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famine for hope and knowledge), yield up a few columns to literature and to nature, and to publication of choice specimens of personal correspondence between human beings pouring their hearts out about intimate details of the price of bread, the cost of divorce, the good mayors, and the good housewives that everywhere abound. The fact is, I subscribe to the London *Observer* as much for Sir Beach Thomas's accounts of what happens in the English countryside as for the closer view of what the House of Commons is doing, or Edward Cranshaw's views on Russian history. And after laying down the issue for July 27, I keep wishing twenty American weeklies, along little streams, once fine for fishing and glossy green banks, would reprint his account of "When a River Dies," which is about the River Lea, the river Walton gave to us all.

To me there seems something silly about Unesco and its immense budget (not so big at that) when, quite easily, editors of small weeklies could take the lead and carry on a lively trade in imperishable goods from the past, and a cross fertilization between national and cultural points of view by means of *belle lettres* and current letters not so belle.

I used to laugh, in the winter of 1940, in Paris, at an old lady who brought her London *Times* to the Café Flore and always read first a little feature on the editorial page called "Old and True," a reprint of bits and thoughts from Milton, the King James version, Donne, Walton, Cobbett, from the great treasure house of English prose, moments in the community of England's great and faithful. I used to laugh, and now, perversely disregarding the news, I always read what Donald Adams has culled from the masterpieces, the poems and the prose, in the New York Sunday *Times* supplement. There is no reason why all the weeklies clear across the country should not open their columns to reminders of what Walt Whitman and Thoreau used to say. Or John Quincy Adams or John Peter Altgeld?

If *Readers Digest* can track down nine million readers of snippets and snappets, and infinite semi-variety, why cannot country editors learn to spread a little board of samples of other times and other places?

It might PAY!

It would set the librarians to culling, maybe to finding readers for books that would tell more about sacred and profane love than the latest novel; more about local politics than any editor dare suggest; create a demand for telescopes as well as frigidaires; a curiosity about orioles and Alexander I of Russia's plan for the peace of Europe; and maybe a taste for Confucius and Kropotkin. You cannot acquire a taste for what you have never sampled; and you will go on thinking you have to take your news lying down and cowering if you have to listen to uninterruptable columnists who give you all the answers, all *their* answers, once, thrice or six times a week, without ever letting you interrupt with questions, *your* questions.

So much wisdom is "out of copyright," so much current copyright wordage isn't wisdom at all. I wish the readers would bestir themselves, and private letters, like amateur nights on the radio, give the nonprofessional observers a place on printed pages.

I do not forget what happened in Camden, Maine, two summers ago. One of the summer visitors was bestirred to write memoirs of his own experience at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919; and of storms blowing in the Middle East. It was pleasant thereafter to have the local butcher comment on both subjects; the local Baptist minister invite the hermit to talk to the congregation; and the whole community register its pleasure in something other than the well-packaged syndicated goods.

A little home-cooking and à la carte fare, instead of the big table d'hôte in the American press, even a little fasting, might give us all more appetite.

Books of the Week

The Beginning of the U.S. Army 1783-1812. *James Ripley Jacobs. Princeton.* $5.00.

THIS INTELLIGENT history is by no means as specialized in content and interest as it is in title. The military history is good, and the understanding of our army and of its "traditions" requires a book like this one. But, furthermore, the author's claim in his preface is true, that the pages, "of necessity, also describe an important and somewhat neglected section of our social history." That, principally, is the taking over and first settling of the Northwest Territory, the beginnings of the incorporation in the Union of the Louisiana Purchase, and, in very general, the establishment of the federal government as a powerful and sovereign machine and institution. There is much material to assist realistic judgments on the first presidents and other earliest governmental leaders.

Major Jacobs definitely believes in a strong and professional regular Army and makes a powerful argument. It is fairly easy to imagine a writer with a different bias building up an almost opposite theme and atmosphere by starting with a love of the citizen-soldier with gun over mantel, and with a prejudice for the militia, for ad hoc temporary enlistments, and for humiliation of governmental pretensions. But it is hard to find an answer to a basic theme inherent in nearly all of this story: a citizenry and government (of this country, at least) seem prone to push in various overwhelming ways for policies which, honestly faced, require force of arms as active instrument or threat in order to be carried out, and at the same time they are prone to refuse the responsibility of admitting the power element of their policies and of developing the suitable force of arms. Morally it is very cowardly, and practically wasteful and somewhat murderous for friend and enemy alike. It is certainly tough on both regular and sudden soldiers who must pay for neglect of the military with inconveniences, disasters and deaths when force of arms, after all, is called into play. PHILIP BURNHAM.

Prince of Darkness, and Other Stories. J. F. Powers. Doubleday. $2.75.

LET US begin by saying that Mr. J. F. Powers, although a young man and introduced to the readers of *Accent* only four years ago, has one sure position in American letters: he is the author of one of the finest stories ever written in this country, "Lions, Harts, Leaping Does." In that story, as in most of his work, Mr. Powers does what few short-story writers can do. He avoids the stereotyped two-dimensional layout, the affected obliquity which keeps everything on the same level, and the colorless neutrality which makes such an obvious pre-

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tense of "objectivity." He is unabashedly inside his story, focusing on objects, catching nuances for us, and heightening the volume when he wishes. (Volume, too, is a rare thing; and Mr. Powers is not afraid of it.)

His perceptions are interesting not only for their acuteness but for the mass of dense particulars which they penetrate. In a story like "Lions, Harts, Leaping Does," he must cut through a good deal of very subtle moral theology in order to make his perception, but the perception comes through.

It is not that there is only one particular kind of thing that he sees through: the stories in this book concerning, for instance, the clergy reveal much more than black and white. There are shades and shades: the very beautiful and holy, which is not to say untroubled, death in the story I have mentioned; the heartless worldliness of the Monsignor in "The Forks" and of the pastor in "The Lord's Day"; the humor and the loneliness of the priesthood in "The Valiant Woman"; and the delicately controlled lukewarmth and yet pathetic human-ness of his principal character in the title-story. Besides all this, Mr. Powers sees deeply into such things as the mind of an embittered European ("Renner"), a little boy's adulation of a baseball player ("Jamesie"), the pathos of old age ("The Old Bird, A Love Story"), and the troubled human values beneath race hatred and violence ("The Eye," "The Trouble," "He Don't Plant Cotton.")

The writing is almost perfect. It suffers occasionally from insistence (in, for example, "The Lord's Day"), but I can think of nothing else which keeps it from being completely obedient to all that Mr. Powers wants to do with it. Consider the Monsignor in "The Forks" who always called his Buick "she" and "kept her on a special diet—only the best of gas and oil and grease, with daily rubdowns." When he pulls a cinder out of the tire-tread, his tyrannized assistant thinks he sees "the car lift a hoof, gaze around, and thank Monsignor with her headlights."

It is not in my province—or my competence—as a literary critic to say what is or is not salubrious for another person's interior life, but I cannot resist saying that "Prince of Darkness" could not be anything but edifying to believers in literal Christianity. HENRY RAGO.

The Hidden Weapon: The Story of Economic Warfare. David L. Gordon and Royden Dangerfield. Harper. $3.50.

DURING THE WAR there was a standard set of Washington jokes about the civilian "chairborne brigades" and "paragraph troopers." This was especially true of the economic warfare branch. Due to the tight security which was clamped on its work, public understanding of the magnitude and importance of its accomplishment was incomplete, and public sympathy almost non-existent. This volume is a careful, accurate and restrained study of this part of our war effort.

The authors have not employed the usual scholarly apparatus in documenting their work, which is appropriate in a study designed for popular consumption. But the seal of authority is set on their discussion by their close and intimate knowledge of the subject. Both were, at different times, chiefs of the blockade division of the Foreign Economic Administration.

Their story details the difficult process of establishing and maintaining a blockade against our enemies. This had to be accomplished against a continuous stream of neutral trading with the enemy. Neither the blacklist, currency controls nor preemptive buying could halt all trade with the enemy. The economic requirements of neutrals, the changing pattern of Allied political power and military success all conditioned our efforts to bottle up Germany and Japan economically. The ultimate success of this work is not open to question; but its measurement in precise terms is difficult because of the indirect way in which it worked. Thus, buying up the Swedish supply of ball-bearings would have a profound effect on German aircraft production which in turn would influence the Allied power to bomb strategic targets, deep in enemy territory. But to trace the pattern of causality through the fragmentary intelligence of war cannot be done.

The authors, by the tone of their writing and through careful qualifications, play down the sensations aspects of their work. At times, however, their efforts were in the ripest and most spectacular traditions of "cloak and dagger" intelligence. An agent in a busy port noticed that a couple of kegs of molasses were especially heavy. When the false bottoms were ripped out they revealed inch-thick plates of pure platinum, a war material desperately needed by the Germans. When it was discovered that an organized smuggling ring was shipping industrial diamonds and other vitally needed supplies to the enemy from South America, an American intelligence operative was placed with this gang, rose to be its leader and finally managed to effect its capture. In cooperation with the British, the Turkish government was induced to prevent the transhipment of parcel post packages to Japan via Russia. The Turks could not afford an open break with either Russia or Japan, but solved the problem by always managing to place the mail sacks on the wrong train, which would wind up in Palestine and hence into the hands of the British censorship.

The principle value of the book does not lie in its sensational episodes, but in its clear and cogent analysis of the changes that have been made, as result of total war, in our historical concepts of international law. Neutrality is an obsolete and unworkable concept. It results in continued commerce with the enemy in wartime inasmuch as all commodities are now weapons of war, and the term contraband, as a result, has ceased to have meaning. The authors by their competent discussion of the subject have broached a subject which requires prompt and adequate attention not only by our international jurists, but by the United Nations, as well.

This book cannot be praised enough. At one stroke, the authors have written a study that will for many years remain definitive, and which can only be improved by specialized monographs on particular details. The public, economists, and political scientists owe them a great debt of gratitude. R. RICHARD WOHL.

The Psychology of Rumor. Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman. Holt. $3.50.

MESSRS. ALLPORT AND POSTMAN, both of Harvard, and professor and instructor, respectively in psychology, have written a convincing story of the mechanics of rumor. The book is most intelligible to persons familiar with theoretical discussion on the subject, although the listing of old wives' tales that spread like wild-fire in times of crises, make interesting reading for the uninitiated.

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The authors reflect at the outset, that a large part of ordinary social conversation consists of rumor-mongering, but observe sagely that most rumors and gossip are far from idle. Their experiences in wartime rumor-tracing, moved them to attempt a unified and coherent account of the primary phenomena of rumor. There is the possibility, however, that the authors have made the study a trifle weighty. For example, to observe that the amount of rumor in circulation will vary with the importance of the subject to the individuals concerned *times* the ambiguity of the evidence pertaining to the topic at issue, does not call for the subsequent expansion of this observation into such lengthy phrase-making.

"Rumor," they note, "is set in motion and continues to travel in a homogeneous social medium by virtue of the strong interests of the individuals involved in the transmission. The powerful influence of these interests requires the rumor to serve largely as a rationalizing agent: explaining, justifying, and providing meaning for the emotional interest at work. At times the relationship between the interest and the rumor is so intimate that we may describe the rumor simply as a projection of an altogether emotional condition."

Rumor is most frenzied in times of crisis. Such things as a long desired peace in times of war, unrestrained bitterness during race and religious conflicts, or the outbreak of passion during an election are always the cause of the spread of rumor.

The authors observe that the three psychological steps in testimony—perceiving, remembering and reporting play their part in rumor, but do not occur in order, and are more likely to be repeated endlessly and placed beyond separation. "What we perceive," the authors observe, "is already influenced by what we remember concerning the relevant experiences in the past and is sometimes influenced also by what we intend to report."

Although most stories spread with the central theme intact, occasionally the central theme can be lost in transmission. Historical events are handed down with the reason for an act sometimes totally lost. In rumor, however, a story that starts out as a piece of anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-Negro prejudice can lose its details and glorifications without losing the central theme and purpose.

Drawing room talk, so-called "inside" and scientific information are common in a world that prides itself on its objectivity. But the public is not rumor-wise. The authors show that progress was made during World War II in strengthening nations against enemy propaganda. Through the use of many tested methods they hope to lay the foundation for a science that will combat rumor.

GEORGE STREATOR.

Alexander the Great—The Meeting of East and West in World Government and Brotherhood. Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr. Dutton. $3.75.

TWO THOUSAND two hundred and eighty-one years ago a youth of 23 years, Godlike in his physical beauty and perhaps convinced that he was a son of Zeus, invaded Asia to liberate the Greek colonies from the yoke of an Asiatic king. But the liberator became the world's most ambitious conqueror reaching out into the foothills of the fabulous Punjab. When he agreed to return to the West, he was convinced that he had been close to the boundary of the habitable world, not far away from the shores of the "Eastern Ocean." When the God-like man of success died at the age of thirty-two it seemed like the end of a fairy tale of human power and good luck.

This was such a fascinating story that it had to be told and retold through the changing times. Last year it was told by a great raconteur of our times, Harold Lamb, the biographer of Genghis Khan. This year the story is retold by Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr., professor of classics at Brown University.

Mr. Robinson feels so much superior to an outsider like Harold Lamb that he ignores his appealing book, both in his text and in his bibliography. Robinson, proud of his so-called exact scholarship, has not treated subjects so far away from Alexander as has the amateur Lamb, he has not wasted his time by extended travels through the countries conquered by the Macedonian—he studied his books and wrote for eighteen years specialized articles on Alexander, published in some very boring but highly reputable archaeological, historical, philological and geographical magazines.

Whatever your esteem for this kind of specialized research, when he comes to discussion of World Government and Brotherhood, the learned professor tells the problems of Alexander's times in the brand new phrases of the United Nations ideology like a third rate journalist.

Every conqueror has tried to justify the sufferings he brought to his unhappy contemporaries by vague utopias. In this regard Alexander was in the same boat with Napoleon and Hitler. It seems to me that the thirteen years of Alexander's power were as painful and depressing for the hunted and conquered as were the thirteen years of Hitler. Alexander was neither a Paulus nor even a Roosevelt but an Oriental despot who did not care for the liberty and dignity of men.

Professor Robinson sheds tears that Alexander was so much absorbed by conquest that he had not enough time to develop his ideas of world government. We have read the same sentimental tirades about Napoleon; and I am afraid we will read them one day about Hitler. I am deeply convinced that such personal speculations do not aid an historical and psychological understanding of world conquerors, but lead only to a dangerous romanticism that adds to the glamor of the Caesars.

MAX FISCHER.

Report on the Germans. W. L. White. Harcourt. $3.00.

FOR A REPORT on the Germans Mr. W. L. White confines his research to the remarks of a ubiquitous former attaché of the German Ministry of Propaganda, of a Jewish woman who has survived, of three "leg men" who circulate on his behalf in Berlin bars, of Dr. Harold Fishbein, an American in charge of a Jewish refugee camp, of an unrepentant nazi journalist, a newspaperwoman, and the young daughter of a baroness. The limitations of this list are even greater than appears, for, as Mr. White admits, he speaks poor German, and often depending on interpreters, he restricts himself almost entirely to Berlin. Three of his key witnesses are journalists and an excessively disproportionate amount of space is given to the attaché from Goebbels's Ministry. Though much of the dialogue is good, the book falls far short of the dimensions of the problem. Conversations with one attachè and opinions collected secondhand from Berlin bars, and these are much of the book, do not constitute

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SUFFERN, NEW YORK

"A Report on the Germans." Much of the material could have been collected by correspondents from Kansas.

His meager results were to be expected. Thus his research discloses that 6,000,000 Jews were murdered and few Germans knew about it; of course it was broadcast by the BBC but that was propaganda. Again, Mr. White has to badger his scouts to bring him an unrepentant nazi. It appears all the important nazis have been rounded up and the lesser ones now see that they were taken in by "tall talk and fake promises." Yet the fact remains they once approved the tall talk so accurately outlined in "Mein Kampf," and so tall that the democracies could not believe Hitler meant what he said; and while he was successful, the majority of the German people supported him, but in defeat the same program becomes "fake promises."

In a second short section Mr. White leaves the reporting to analyze Wilson's peace and ours. Here his conclusions are that the demand for unconditional surrender was a mistake, that the Versailles Treaty was too severe and that this present peace, being more severe, will also fail to provide the foundation of a democratic Germany. Conversely, a prosperous and democratic Germany will look back on Hitler "as a madman dominating a nightmare."

Both sections are superficial. In the first we get mostly apologetic chatter, in the latter an analysis which touches not at all the deeper aspects of German history from Luther to Hitler in the light of which nazism must be seen.

EDWARD LITTLEJOHN.

Appreciation: Painting, Poetry and Prose. Leo Stein. Crown. $2.50.

LEO STEIN had a "neurosis" that kept him from painting and the same neurosis kept him from writing. But whatever it was he had did not keep him from writing entirely, because, years ago, he wrote the "ABC of Aesthetics," which he says was extremely technical and boring and which I have not read, and recently, just a week or two before he died, he gave us "Appreciation"—a wonderful book. There are floods of books about writing and painting, and the word "appreciation" on the cover of a book is enough to scare many people away. The young ladies and gentlemen in our colleges take courses in art appreciation and when these lead to anything at all it is to a job in a museum or in the art department of an advertising agency. For such useful employment, however, only the few are chosen; the rest, "art appreciation" helps much in the manner that a finishing schools helps young ladies not to say the wrong word when they catch their foot in the carpet.

Leo Stein's appreciation is not that kind. He has a strong feeling for using words that mean something, and that can be made to mean precisely what he who uses them wants them to mean. He has a passion for veracity. "Veracity means not lying, and nothing more stands in the way of veracity than words like *democracy, liberty, goodwill, liberal culture, ideals* and hundreds of other words, which sound as though they mean something particular but really mean anything or nothing. . . . The habit of veracity, of not pretending, is fundamental." He has very little use for art criticism and that, perhaps, is why his book on art criticism is good.

Leo Stein is a man who started out in America with an inclination toward science, followed scientific studies, and

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then went abroad and stayed there. He is a man who went abroad and started looking at paintings. He looked at paintings, bought paintings, talked to painters, tried himself to paint; he stood looking at paintings in the Louvre, then traveled through Italy looking at paintings, and then he came back to Paris and watched Picasso at work, Matisse, and lived with his sister Gertrude and kept on looking at paintings and talking about paintings to anyone who would listen. But each time that he looked at a painting it was as if he saw one for the first time. He paid no attention to the way they were described to him, or to the rank they had been assigned by centuries of critics, or to the rank their creators claimed for them when they were contemporary and there was no one yet to deny or grant them importance. He looked at them to find out why he liked them or did not like them. He had to find out for himself. He hated pretended knowledge, pretended understanding and appreciation. He spent a lifetime forming his own opinion. He did not waste that lifetime.

During all his life he read great poetry and great prose; there was room for reading in his mind which was not just a painter's mind. (There was no room for religion in his mind and it is a pity that he ever mentions religion because, there, he accepted without taking the trouble to go into the matter for himself, the scientific rubber stamp judgments which in the field of literature and of art he was so careful to reject.) He read poetry and prose with the same "habit of veracity" with which he looked at paintings.

Everyone knows that his sister Gertrude influenced a number of writers when she talked about writing to the circle that surrounded her in the famous apartment in the rue de Fleurus. It would be interesting to know how many people were influenced by her brother's talk. He admits that he talked peoples' ears off. And I suppose that with them both talking it was inevitable that the two should separate. But all that is past and gone and though it is amusing to see Leo Stein hardly aware in this book that Gertrude did anything of interest, and determined to show that he bought paintings before she did, the amusement is only for those readers who remember that Gertrude was hardly aware—after the break—that Leo existed or had anything worthwhile to say. Interest in this book can be impersonal, and Leo Stein's influence, whether it was important or not during his life for the people who knew him and listened to him talk, can be important, I think extremely important, to people who read his fine book now that he is dead.

There is first of all the distinction he makes between the prosaic and the poetic: "The poetic never has as its objective the statement of a fact, however many facts it states. There is always reference to an interest that goes beyond that fact in the observer's experience"; the prosaic deals with facts; it becomes poetic the moment the facts are made to serve as symbols. Then there is the fundamental distinction he draws between composition and construction which is a parallel to the poetic and the prosaic. These distinctions are elaborated in chapters on reading and seeing and whenever they seem too abstract there is always the precise illustration—a reference to a painting or to a book or to a personal experience or a conversation—that saves the reader just when he begins to feel that all Mr. Stein's rigorous and precise thinking is leading him into one more esthetic treatise in which words

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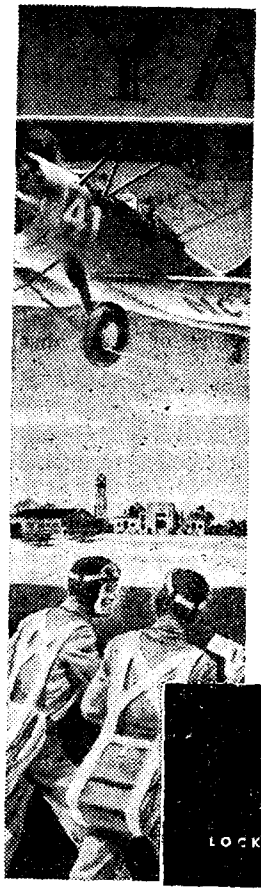

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and meaning run away and escape. Mr. Stein says himself—because he knows how often he has failed to finish a book on esthetics—"I am always uncertain when speaking of these things how far a reader can get what I mean." If the reader has trouble with Mr. Stein—very little trouble I can guaranty and never for long—it will only be in the first and more theoretical, and more important, half of this book. The later chapters cover Mr. Stein's personal "adventures" with painters and paintings. Picasso has never been given a rougher passage: "Breathing life and charm into things is what made me take to Picasso in the first place, and if he had gone on doing this with increase of passion and of power as he matured, my interest would have continued and doubtless grown. But when he became an intellectual at a contemptible level of degradation I couldn't accept it. Of course his talent did not die, it became in fact more mature. . . . It is not the lack of ability that puts me off, but the silliness." Of Rousseau Mr. Stein has this to say: "I prefer this primitiveness expressed either as pure barbarism or at my own level of intelligence and culture, and not at that of chambermaids, bus drivers and *douaniers*." Matisse is the great contemporary.

I quote these judgments because they are samples of a hundred amusing and valuable remarks. Mr. Stein would not have wished them quoted because the purpose of his book is to make the reader make all his judgments for and by himself.

This book which is a treatise on esthetics, a guide to appreciation, a commentary on poetry, prose and painting is also an autobiography—the best kind of autobiography, the story of a man's growing thought. Leo Stein had an experimental mind and, I suppose, he would say that his first interest in science persisted, leading him always to look at everything with a fresh eye as if nothing had a right to exist just because someone else said it was there: one had to look at it oneself—then it existed. That "habit of veracity" is also the painter's habit and the writer's habit, and it was naturally, therefore, that Leon Stein had a special aptitude for the understanding of works of art and of the process through which they come to exist. Probably he was considered, by those who knew only that he lived abroad, collected paintings and talked, as a phenomenon uselessly surviving from an easier and leisured century. If he had not written this excellently solid book that judgment could still be presumptuous and utilitarian, for, if it is better to transmit the knowledge one has, it is necessary first to acquire it—disinterestedly.

C. G. PAULDING.

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